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ABSTRACT

Learning content and ideas while learning to read should be integrated, not separate, elements. Individualized reading emphasizes that students engage in holistic reading instruction. First, a student selects a library book from among several genres. After completing the reading of the book, the student has a conference with the classroom teacher. Critical and creative thinking, as well as problem solving, may be used in the conference. Holism emphasizes that the contents of the entire library book are read and then discussed. In addition to individualized reading, the big book procedure (especially suitable for young children) may be used. A third procedure in holism instruction involves a language experience approach. For each of these three procedures, the teacher may bring in phonics as desired at the end of the reading activity, such as in a game that is being played. There are two other methods of using the whole word method in reading instruction: sustained silent reading, and taking home books from the library to read. Basal readers have their values in helping students become proficient and knowledgeable readers. The basal reader is a neutral device, neither good nor bad, but its effective use, as with all textbooks which are developmentally appropriate, depends upon the teacher's skill in assisting students to enjoy reading and learn content as background information. With a skillful teacher, it is possible to provide enjoyable, holistic experiences to students in reading instruction. (NKA)

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Reading to Enrich the Self and Others.

by Marlow Ediger

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READING TO ENRICH THE SELF AND OTHERS

Individuals need to read well so that reading becomes an act of pleasure, entertainment, and helps in continual development regardless of the vocation/ profession chosen. Too frequently, in the school setting, individuals for one reason or another did not learn to read well and this is most unfortunate. Certainly, they are missing out on a lot in school and in society. What might the school do to assist pupils to learn to read at an appropriate level?

Learning to Read and Reading to Learn

Learning content and ideas while learning to read should become integrated, not separate elements. There is no reason for emphasizing word recognition skills, for example, when pupils are actively engaged in reading for ideas. The ideas read will tend to motivate pupils in finding that reading has its very own values. Acquiring skills in word recognition will facilitate comprehension, but should not hinder reading for enjoyment.

There are whole language philosophies of instruction which assist pupils in comprehension of ideas as well as in word recognition techniques. Individualized reading emphasizes that pupils engage in holistic reading instruction. Thus, a pupil selects a library book to read, from among other genres. An adequate number of library books need to be in the offing so that the learner may choose a book which has appeal, appears to be interesting, as well as one which is on his/her reading level. The pupil then reads the library book in its entirety. There should be a system of helping pupils who cannot recognize words while reading so that comprehension of content is sequentially possible. Otherwise, the reader is on his/her own. After completing the reading of the library book, the pupil has a conference with the classroom teacher. The pupil discusses with the teacher what has been comprehended. Critical and creative thinking, as well as problem solving, may be used in the conference. The emphasizes is upon holism in that the contents of the entire library book are read and then discussed (See Sardana, 2002, 29-33). Individualized reading does not

1. emphasize systematic phonics instruction.
2. stress word recognition techniques as separate from ideas being read. Word recognition is emphasized when a pupil needs a word pronounced during the time the library book is being read. Holism is still in evidence in the reading act.
3. paper pencil testing to ascertain what a pupil has

achieved. Through teacher observation, evaluation occurs in context as the pupil is reading silently and attending to content being read and also to what has been learned from reading ideas within a conference setting Pupil enjoyment of reading and reading for its own sake is being stressed in individualized reading. Pupils, too, may discuss ideas acquired with peers in a committee setting. Sharing ideas aids in clarifying facts, concepts, and generalizations acquired.

In addition to individualized reading, the big book procedure may be used. For young children, in particular, the teacher may use the Big Book procedure in teaching reading. Holism is also involved here in teaching reading. The Big Book is large enough for all readers in a group to see the words clearly. The teacher discusses the related pictures with pupils prior to reading. Background information is then being developed within learners so that the content to be read is understood. The teacher reads aloud the content and points to each word as the reading act moves forward fluently. Pupils attention is drawn to the words within the ideas being read. Pupil comprehension and word recognition are not separated, but integrated entities. A second read aloud involves both the teacher and pupils in the small group. Again, the words are pointed to as the reading for ideas act proceeds. Reading together aloud may be done as often as preferred. Pupils may then discuss what has been read with the teacher. holism is inherent in that the entire selection is read and not segmented to analyze unknown words (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Sixteen).

A third procedure in holism instruction involves a language experience approach. Here, the teacher may have a table with selected objects for pupils to observe. After observations have been made and learners have discussed the objects among themselves, they may present related ideas for the teacher to print in neat, manuscript letters on the chalkboard, or with the use of a word processor to show on an enlarged screen. The teacher may then read aloud the words as he/she points to each sequentially. Next pupils with teacher guidance read the contents aloud fluently as the teacher still points to each word being read. The contents may be read aloud as often as desired. The pupil is learning to identify each word by sight in context. No word is being analyzed as would be true in a systematic phonics approach in reading instruction. A holistic method of reading instruction is then in evidence (See Ediger, 1985, 8-11).

For each of the three above named procedures in teaching,

the teacher may bring in phonics as desired at the end of the reading activity, such as in a game that is being played. Thus, from words read in the Big Book, the teacher may ask involved pupils , "Which other words on this page begin like "small?" This is done as the teacher points to this word. Words could also be asked of pupils that end like "run." He/she points to the word "run," as pupils look for an answer. However those advocating whole language approaches in teaching reading do not stress the use of phonics, but rather the entire selection is to be read in order to focus upon the content. Pupils do learn to build a sight vocabulary, but this is done through choosing enjoyable reading materials as in individualized reading. Enjoyment is also stressed in the language experience procedure when pupils contribute to developing experience charts. Both approaches emphasize reading and rereading as frequently as is desired to achieve a basic sight vocabulary for reading. Basic sight vocabularies assist pupils to immediately recognize words in print and to transfer these learnings to new subject matter to be read. Interesting content read makes for pupil effort in learning, achieving, and developing in the reading curriculum.

There are two additional methods of using the whole word method in reading instruction. Thus, a fourth method is sustained silent reading (SSR). Here, each pupil in a classroom chooses a library book to read. At an appropriate time, all in the classroom read content, individually, from the library book selected. The emphasis is upon holism. No segmentation of subject matter read for phonics instruction, nor for other purposes in the teaching arena is in evidence. The pupil reads for the sole purpose of enjoyment and interest. There are no tests given to assess learner comprehension. SSR is indeed an informal procedure in reading instruction. It is good for pupils to see adult role models in reading such as the classroom teacher. There are entire schools which have stressed SSR whereby all read at a specific time, custodians and cafeteria workers included!

A fifth approach is to have pupils take library books home from school to read. Library books may also be checked out from the municipal public library for home reading. Pupils might share content read with parents, as well as in school within a small group or committee setting. Parents should be actively involved in encouraging pupil reading in the home setting.

Approaches four and five listed above are highly informal. For unstructured evaluation, the teacher may notice which books children take home for possible reading. Although the greatest opportunity to notice pupil progress in reading books at home will be when learners present ideas during sharing time

and in ongoing discussions of literature read. There are numerous pupils who do provide related ideas read at home to the ongoing discussion in school. Perhaps, in ongoing units of study in different curriculum areas, pupils present related ideas for discussion. A Book Club can be developed in school whereby pupils share information gleaned from library books read at home. The author when supervising student teachers in the public schools noticed several schools which used the Book Club concept to assist pupils to share what had been read at home with others in the school setting. Additional advantages of encouraging home reading by pupils are the following:

1. pupils are becoming increasingly proficient in reading as indicated by school progress reports.
2. pupils are showing a greater interest in a variety of genres in reading and are showing this with the library books being checked out in school.
3. pupils are revealing more fluency in reading aloud and in discussing ideas acquired through reading.
4. pupils are relating ideas gleaned from reading within ongoing literature, science, social studies, and mathematics units of study.
5. pupils are using subject matter achieved from library book reading through written work in prose and poetry (See Gunning, 2000, pp. 378 and 532-536).

Using Basal Readers in Learning to Read and Reading to Learn

Basal readers do have their values in helping pupils become proficient and knowledgeable readers. The stories in the basal have been chosen sequentially by those other than the pupil. However, the teacher can certainty develop pupil interest in reading the sequential stories in the basal reader. The basal reader is a neutral device and is neither good nor bad, but its effective use, as do all textbooks which are developmentally appropriate, depend upon the teacher's skill in assisting pupils to enjoy reading and learn much content as background information for use in school and in society. Basals have accompanying Manuals which may provide many good suggestions for teaching pupils in learning to read. To emphasize what might transpire in teaching and learning, the creative teacher is the chooser in terms of selecting objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation techniques from the manual of the basal reader. Using the basal reader has the following additional advantages as compared to having no structure in the reading program and may well be used along with

the above named previously discussed holistic approaches in reading instruction:

1. the entire formal reading curriculum is contained in the basal and its accompanying manual. Thus the literature to be read, the related suggestions for teaching reading, and the suggestions for assessment procedures are contained in the reader and the manual.

2. the manual contains suggestions for teaching only, not absolutes. The teacher must always be creative in developing and modifying the reading curriculum.

3. reading specialists have developed the contents of the basal, but it is up to the teacher to provide for individual differences among learners in the classroom. These differences include interests possessed, abilities, talents, purposes, and capabilities. Individuals possess multiple intelligences and each intelligence needs to be considered in developing the reading curriculum (See Gardner, 1993).

4. the reading teacher needs to use personal knowledge of each pupil when ascertaining what and how to teach pupils in reading. Thus, selected pupils may need more background information, prior to reading a given selection, as compared to others in class.

5. motivational devices need to be used in teaching reading. There is a great need to motivate reading efforts so that each pupil may achieve at a higher level in reading instruction.

6. the teacher needs to think of and use creative approaches in evaluating pupil achievement in reading. increased efforts to achieve as optimally as possible need to be in the offing. Principles of learning from educational psychology must be emphasized by the reading teacher to stimulate pupil achievement.

7. the reading teacher needs to harmonize personal goals for learners to achieve in reading as compared to state mandated objectives of instruction. State standards may be unreasonable, in some cases, but the teacher needs to do the best possible to guide optimal learner progress in reading. Hopefully, state standards for pupils to achieve in reading may not amount to drill only, in having pupils do well on state mandated tests.

8. a variety of evaluation techniques need to be used in ascertaining pupil reading achievement. A single test score is not adequate to indicate learner progress in reading. Rather, a variety of procedures need to be used, including portfolios. The portfolio contents may reveal how well a pupil is doing in every day reading experiences.

9. the teacher needs to notice which kinds of experiences assist individual pupils to achieve optimally in reading. Pupils are individuals and reading must not be taught en mass to learners.

10. The teacher needs to diagnose reading needs of individual pupils and then assist each learner to overcome diagnosed difficulties and problems (See Searson and Dunn (2001).

Basal readers do have their advantages over other plans of instruction, such as having an attached manual which may well offer assistance in planning the objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation procedures in teaching and learning situations.

With a skillful teacher it is possible for the teacher to provide enjoyable, holistic experiences to pupils in reading instruction.

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